

**Highlights  
of the  
White-Tailed Deer Management Plan  
for the  
City of Rockville**

1. The City of Rockville will practice an attitude of acceptance of, and tolerance for the deer activity as part of the City's natural environment and will foster this attitude among the public through education.
2. The City will monitor and evaluate the success and failure of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Management Plan for White-Tailed Deer, as may be beneficial to the objectives of the City.
3. The first recommended control measures will be those of exclusion, the use of repellents, and the use of undesirable plants. These are measures which deny wildlife the food or shelter which it seeks. It is the responsibility of private property owners to take reasonable steps to exclude problem wildlife from their land. The City will initiate a public education program, including videos and brochures.
4. A survey of the white-tailed deer population in and around the City will be made to determine if populations are straining the carrying capacity of the environment. This survey shall be conducted by individuals capable and experienced in this type of project.
5. Based on the findings of the survey, population control measures may be required. A direct reduction controlled hunt may be implemented, utilizing specially certified and permitted shooters, to remove deer from areas where hunting is presently not allowed or permitted. Implementation would require coordination and cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources and law enforcement agencies for the State of Maryland, Montgomery County, and the City. Other management actions may be considered in lieu of a controlled hunt.
6. The City will utilize the Montgomery County Comprehensive Management Plan or White-Tailed Deer as a guideline for general management within the City.

# **CITY OF ROCKVILLE WHITE-TAILED DEER CONTROL POLICY**

## **I. OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the white-tailed deer policy is to develop criteria to manage the increasing impact of white-tailed deer on public and private lands within the limits of the City of Rockville.

## **II. OVERVIEW**

Toward the end of 1995, the citizens of Rockville began to express concerns about the rising white-tailed deer population. Of primary concern is the destruction of landscape plants and vegetable gardens.

The white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are extremely adaptable, beautiful creatures whose ecological role is changing. Deer are native to this region, preferring the edges of woodland and brush areas which provide quality cover. Landscape trees and shrubs provide high nutrition sources, as do native sources of browse, such as tree sprouts and seedlings.

**Currently, the City believes that problems may be due to deer being an overburden nuisance, not overpopulation. This theory will be substantiated by an upcoming survey.**

## **III. CONCERNS**

The primary concerns of increasing white-tailed deer populations include:

### **Deer Vehicle Incidents**

Deer vehicle incidents have been reported on Norbeck Road (Route 28) and Wootton Parkway. Deer vehicle incidents, as reported, are on the rise (see attached memorandum).

### **Browsing of Landscape Plantings and Vegetable Gardens**

White-tailed deer will browse on a wide variety of plant material, much of which can be found in the home landscape, such as azaleas, taxus, cherry trees, tulips, and roses.

Browsing can cause considerable damage, such as deformed shape or death to desirable plants, and antler rubbing by bucks can damage trees and shrubs by creating entry points for insects and disease.

### **Lyme Disease**

Lyme disease is an infectious illness that is transmitted to animals and humans by the bite of the deer tick (*Ixodes daminni*). There is evidence that suggests that an increase in the deer population can cause an increase in the number of ticks within that population because the white-tailed deer is a major host to the deer tick and a carrier of lyme disease.

**Damage to Natural Areas**

An overabundance of deer can have a detrimental effect on native vegetation, forest regeneration, and wildlife habitat. Areas of extreme overpopulation may begin to show a "browse line"; where, even in mid-summer, there is little vegetation on the forest floor and trees and shrubs look like they have been neatly "clipped" of all leaves up to about five feet high. When this happens, the forest cannot regenerate, young trees do not mature, and habitats for nesting forest birds and other wildlife are destroyed.

**IV. POLICY STATEMENT**

The City of Rockville will practice **an attitude of tolerance and co-existence for deer** activity as part of the City's natural environment and **will foster this attitude** among the public through education.

**Wildlife is a part of our common wealth.** All citizens benefit from common ownership, while at the same time assuming **a shared responsibility for wildlife's well-being.** In its role as the primary steward of the City's natural resources, the Department of Recreation and Parks recognizes that deer are a natural and desirable component of the environment because they contribute to the quality and diversity of natural habitat. Conflicts arise when deer activity impacts public areas, public health and safety, and private property.

**The significance of the impact will determine what resolution action, if any, will be taken to reduce or eliminate conflict.**

Generally, where efforts are made to reduce conflict with wildlife, the most effective methods are those of exclusion; measures which deny wildlife the food or shelter which it seeks. **It is the responsibility of private property owners to take reasonable steps to exclude problem wildlife from their land.** In the case of deer, these are steps which make the landscaping unattractive or unavailable. Private property owners should consider the following:

- Repellents
- Exclusion
- Electric fences
- Use of resistant or undesirable plants

**V. MANAGEMENT OF THE WHITE-TAILED DEER****Definition**

White-tailed deer management consists of all actions undertaken by the City for the express purpose of manipulating deer populations and/or resolving conflicts of deer activity, whether those actions are initiated by staff or are in response to public inquiries. It also includes any other action that may directly or indirectly impact deer.

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For management purposes, deer activity that results in conflict will be evaluated by the City for the existence of, or potential for:

- Impact to public health and safety
- Impact to private property
- Impact to public parks and facilities.

The significance of these impacts will determine the type of management action taken, but all actions will follow established conflict resolution procedures. Deer management actions will be based on the following:

- Proven wildlife management techniques
- Appropriate animal welfare concerns
- Applicable laws and regulations
- Problem solving

Under City of Rockville law, Section 14-37, the white-tailed deer is protected as a wild animal against harm or destruction on public property. In addition, legal responsibility for resident wildlife, including white-tailed deer, is vested with the State of Maryland through public law (Maryland Annotated Code 10-202 and 10-205). The Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, provides for deer population management through harvest regulations, which are implemented by establishing the length of hunting season, permitted weapons, bag limits, and sex of deer to be harvested. Currently, there is no hunting allowed within the corporate limits of Rockville without the proper permits issued by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

For each type of deer activity, the City will develop procedures as follows:

- Public education (see attached brochure - Protecting Gardens From Deer Damage)
- Exclusion; including, but not limited to fence and screens
- Population management; including, but not limited to reproductive control and euthanasia, as applicable to State law

### **Supervisory Management**

All white-tailed deer conflict actions will be reported and recorded by the City.

- The Neighborhood Services Department and the Department of Recreation and Parks will monitor complaints about nuisance deer and deer/vehicle incidents. This office will make available information specific to these complaints, as well as carrying out the management tactics.

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- The Recreation and Parks Department shall assist the Neighborhood Services Department with the collection of data and the monitoring of effects of the white-tailed deer on parks and natural areas, and coordination with area-wide deer control plans and procedures.

### **Memo of Understanding**

The Montgomery County Government has developed a Comprehensive Management Plan for White-Tailed Deer in Montgomery County, Maryland, which should provide assistance to the City. Therefore, the City of Rockville shall request cooperation in partnership from the State and the designated agencies/departments of Montgomery County, including the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, to identify and initiate appropriate actions to counter problems. The City of Rockville should pursue a "Memo of Understanding" between the City, Montgomery County, and the State of Maryland as part of this cooperative effort in the management of the white-tailed deer

### **Professional Assistance**

The City shall contract with an expert wildlife biologist, with white-tailed deer conflict resolution experience, to assist in the overall objectives of the White-Tailed Deer Control Policy for the City of Rockville, or shall utilize appropriate Department of Natural Resources' assistance

## **VI. METHODOLOGY**

All public concerns about deer activity creating conflicts will be first investigated in the field by City staff using the methodology below:

- Surveys will be pursued to compile pertinent information concerning the white-tailed deer population in and around the City of Rockville. This information, along with other types of monitoring, will be used to identify specific areas of impact to be evaluated on an ongoing basis for the potential of conflict/impact in the urban environment.
- Complainants, adjacent landowners, and homeowners/civic associations where they exist, will be informed immediately of policies and procedures regarding the management of deer.
- Interpretive brochures covering deer management and City management policy and procedures will be made available to adjacent landowners, and homeowners/civic associations where they exist.
- The significance of these impacts will determine the type of management taken, but all actions will follow established conflict resolution procedures.

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- In the case of impacts to private property, the property owner will be counseled to accommodate the deer and tolerate some inconvenience. Interpretive information will be provided as mentioned above, as well as information on exclusion methods. For deer, exclusion methods typically involve eight-foot-tall fencing, baited electric fences, repellents, and use of landscape plants not desirable to deer. Citizens must implement specified exclusion measures, where practical, before other actions will be considered. The City shall provide consultation services, as needed. The City shall assume **no** legal liability for these impacts.
- In situations where exclusion measures are not feasible on private property, the City may take actions on municipal parkland in order to address significant impacts on private property. Such actions will follow established conflict resolution procedures, beginning with exclusion and proceeding through removal of the deer.
- In the case of impacts to public areas, the City may decide to take management actions to protect resources. However, damage to trees, shrubs, and other plants on parkland, in the absence of other impacts, does not necessarily constitute reason for management. In order to determine overall impacts to natural resources, a field investigation of habitat suitability may be conducted.
- If it is determined that the habitat is suitable for a fixed number of deer, the City may implement population control, if practical, to limit the increased populations. If this is not practical, the City will follow established conflict resolution procedures, beginning with exclusion, and ending with the removal of the deer.
- If the habitat is found to be unsuitable, and if exclusion methods fail or are infeasible, or if a safety threat persists, population management actions will be taken as described below. Whatever type of action is taken, it will be conducted in as humane a manner as possible, with due regard for wildlife habitat welfare and the safety of citizens.
- Citizen complainants, adjacent landowners, and homeowner/civic associations where they exist, will be notified of impending population management actions by the City.
- The City will continue to monitor and evaluate the Montgomery County Comprehensive Management Plan for White-Tailed Deer for its success and failure, and implement action specifically beneficial to the City's objectives.

## **VII. CONTROL PLAN**

The following recommended actions require consultation with the State of Maryland, Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and Montgomery County before they are implemented.

**Repellents and Scare Devices**

A variety of chemical (taste, odor) and mechanical (noise or visual alarm) devices have been tested, and under some conditions, they have proven effective in repelling deer from the areas in which they are undesired.

**Concerns**

Extensive literature exists on this subject and many repellents are readily available. The downfall of repellents are that they are not effective in all situations, can be costly, may require frequent reapplication, and may diminish in effectiveness as deer adapt to them.

**Fencing or Physical Exclusion**

Fencing or other barriers can be highly effective in providing permanent protection to resources threatened by deer or by preventing deer from accessing areas where they are not desired.

**Concerns**

Small screens can be effective where protection of individual plants is needed. In natural areas, small fenced plots could protect rare plant species and encourage their reproduction, but the fences would have to be permanently installed unless the density of deer is decreased.

**Direct Reduction**

This alternative involves the use of specially certified and permitted shooters through controlled hunt or other management action to remove deer from areas where hunting is presently not allowed or permitted.

**Concerns**

Implementation of recommended actions would require coordination with Natural Resources and enforcement agencies for the State of Maryland, Montgomery County, and the City. While other parts of the country use this technique, the City would require careful analysis before implementation.

**Reproductive Controls**

The use of contraceptives falls into four basic categories: oral contraceptives, implantation of microencapsulated hormones, surgical sterilization, and immunosterilization (the use of contraceptive vaccines).

**Concerns**

At this time, this is not a viable option due to numerous complications involved; such as the need for frequent application to achieve physiological effectiveness, the need to capture and handle animals, the need for precise annual timing in administering contraceptives, and the current cost of contraceptive programs. There is also a public safety concern and liability relating to consumption of meat from animals treated with

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contraceptives and from exposure of the public to unrecovered delivery devices; e.g., darts which miss their target and contain viable products. In the future, technology may be developed that could make this option practical and less labor intensive.

## **VIII. POLICY DECISIONS**

White-tailed deer conflict action plan decisions will be made by the White-Tailed Deer Control Committee (WDCC):

- City Horticulturist
- Neighborhood Services Representative
- Member of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

Severe conflicts that cannot be decided by the WDCC will be referred to the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board for decision and action authorization.

## **IX. ADMINISTRATION AND AUTHORIZATION**

The White-Tailed Deer Control Policy will be administered by the Director of Recreation and Parks with authority provided by the adoption of this policy by the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board. The White-Tailed Deer Control Policy shall also be subject to periodic review by the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board.

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